

want us to look first to cutting down the size of government, and I think the Appropriations Committee has done a lot of that, more than I would like to see. And in addition, they say if you still need revenues look to the alcohol and the cigarette tax. So that's I think why you're seeing these bills introduced and why you're seeing them advanced. Now the talk about the failure of these institutions, the failure of the local bars and I know Cheers now has gone under but otherwise I think you're going to see the liquor industry is doing pretty good. And how can you argue, I think, with a straight face that the fact that we're going to raise the state tax on beer from 23 cents to 25 cents a gallon is going to break the back of the liquor industry of the state? That's 2 cents more a gallon. I'm sorry but I don't think that's going to make the difference. And in addition, the other tax increases that we have are likewise minuscule. The original bill was a 20 percent increase. This is a 10 percent increase, it's half of what we wanted. In addition, the original bill put all the money into alcoholism and drug and substance abuse programs where they're sorely needed because of the, I think, widespread problems with alcohol and drug abuse. We all know it's in our society, we need more programs, more support. None of that's in the bill anymore, took it all out. We're putting it all straight into the General Fund and that's not easy for me to do. I know it's not easy for Senator Hall to do. I'd like to see the money go into those programs that are hurt by the alcohol abuse that we have in our state. And as I said earlier on General File, alcohol abuse leads to higher health care costs and higher expense for society in many different fashions. So adding to the tax on liquor I think is not a negative in terms of public opinion, is in fact a positive in terms of public policy and it will not, to the degree that we're increasing it here, have a harmful effect on the liquor industry if that's a concern of yours. So again, I think there's many good reasons for advancing the bill. I know you're getting hit hard to oppose it. I know you're getting asked to change your vote if you voted for it before but hang in there because I think the general public the majority support this and understand why we're doing it, and I think there's every good reason to advance the bill. So please again, support the advancement of LB 741.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Hall.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Mr. President, members. I rise also to echo Senator Wesely's comments and to ask you to advance the